Beautyscape or Mrs. Komeda, Serial Killer

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Beautyscape or Mrs. Komeda, Serial Killer

by extremelyperturbed

Summary

Will has to investigate a new series of serial killings that aren't done by the Ripper. Hannibal is miffed.

http://lusiannaw.lofter.com/post/1e7a7646_1196413e is the story translated into Mandarin, translated by Lusiannaw. Thank you.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

"Oh, fuck me," grumbled Brian as he saw the corpse of Freddie Lounds dressed as a Greek goddess with her red hair in an up do. In her right hand, she was holding scales. The janitor, on a smoke break, had found her on the roof of the headquarters of Tattlecrime early in the morning. He had shrieked and ran down the stairs to tell the nearest office manager and called the police.

Hannibal narrowed his eyes. "The scales she is holding and her dress strongly hint that she is representing Themis, the Greek goddess of justice."

"I hope the killer was being ironic," said Jimmy. "What does your spidey sense say, Will?"

Will gave Jimmy a sour look then closed his eyes to get into the mind of the killer. "The killer knew of Freddie's reputation and found much amusement in taking this scandal monger and reshaping her, transforming her body and her meaning. While the killer took great care in this, I do not sense a personal vendetta but acting more out of a deep artistic inspiration. There is a great degree of whimsy in this." Will opened his eyes. "That is all I'm getting out of this. It's not an act of personal revenge or sexual desire."

Beverly frowned. "Are you talking about an artist?"

"Perhaps . . ."

"Is it the Chesapeake Ripper?" said Jack.

FUUUUUUCKKKKKKKKKKK, thought Will before he managed to say between gritted teeth, "Not every murder is committed by the Ripper, Jack . . . Notice that no part of her body was cut off to take away as a trophy. This particular killer is invested in presentation in a very different way than the Ripper. The overall intent is less about shock and more about overall pleasure despite use of a corpse."

"I agree with Will, Jack," said Beverly. "This hair and makeup are totally on point."

Hannibal scowled.

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"Do you find the killer as interesting as you do the Ripper, Will?" said Hannibal at their unofficial therapy sessions. He had sneakily moved his chair closer and closer to Will's with each counseling session.

"Not particularly," said Will. "I haven't really had a dream about it."

"That's good."

"I have to confess I'm not especially unhappy she was a victim. That sounds terrible, doesn't it?"

"When one is done wrong by someone, it is natural to feel schadenfreude. Let yourself feel it and then let it go."

"Mind you, the forensic team found some very interesting things regarding Freddie's corpse."

"Like what?"

"Despite what must have been extensive handling of the body, there was no fingerprints or any detectable hairs or fibers left by the killer. However, it was noted that the tunic Freddie was wearing was made of very fine quality linen and her makeup was not done by an amateur. Also, Beverly had a suggestion that I think I agree with."

"What is that suggestion?"

"Our serial killer might be a woman. Though I do wonder about the strength it would take to put Freddie on the roof."

"Perhaps she had help. Or is exceptionally strong."

"This might be the only murder this person commits."

The thought perked Hannibal up. He didn't want Will to be distracted by any other serial killer than himself.

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Hannibal was flipping through a glossy art book of Hieronymous Bosch paintings, trying to get the creative juices flowing. He could appreciate other people's work and a little competition just inspired him to up his game a little. He would soon have Will thinking and dreaming of his creations alone. He also pondered whether he should make gumbo and hush puppies or perhaps serve sashimi from Tsukiji market with real wasabi for their next dinner.

His phone rang. "Hello, this is Hannibal."

"Hannibal, this is Jack. Do you happen to know a Franklyn Froideveaux?"

"Why do you ask?" Hannibal's eyes nearly rolled back in his skull. That man probably blurted out that he had Hannibal as a therapist.

"They found his body. His diary states that he was your patient."

Wait, thought Hannibal, I don't remember killing him!

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal arrived at the site where Franklyn's body was found. His eyebrows raised a micrometer up in surprise. The man's girth was much reduced and he seemed taller. His face had been shaved and his hair was styled in a more complementary fashion. The expression on his face was serious and dignified. He had been positioned as if looking out over the edge of a cliff. He was dressed in a dark green overcoat and a walking stick had been put in his right hand. "He looks much changed since last I saw him," said Hannibal.

"Yeah, he really doesn't look like the pictures I've seen of him. She even used contouring to make his face look thinner," said Beverly. "I think she's even threaded his eyebrows." Franklyn had been in the background of a lot of pictures of society galas and opening nights at various artistic venues.

"How do you know so much about makeup?" said Will.

"I watch a lot of vids on Youtube."

Brian snarked. "I"ve read the comments at Tattlecrime about Freddie's death. They mourn her so deeply they've offered a five hundred dollar reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killer. Also a lot of people are saying that they are so amazed by the killer's makeover abilities, they've dubbed the killer The Beautician. Also, they want a makeover if it wouldn't involve becoming a corpse."

"Wow, the generosity of her employer," said Jimmy. "It just gives me a tingly sensation deep in my groin."

"So, is this the work of the Ripper?" said Jack.

Will wanted to rage scream. "No, no, no, it's not the Ripper's work."

Hannibal's estimation of Jack's intelligence plummeted precipitously. "It is obviously not the Ripper's." Despite how risky it would be, he half considered putting Jack on his list of people to make into a roast.

"How was the body found?"

"A pair of hikers were walking by and asked him a question about wifi only to find that he was in no condition to answer."

A hiker walked by, turned around and pulled out a selfie stick about to take a photo of himself along with the investigation team in the background.

"No! This is an investigation. Get out of here!" screamed Jack.

"I fart in your general direction!" yelled the hiker before he ran off.

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After having searched for clues around the site where the body was found, the body was transported back to the lab. Out of curiosity, both Will and Hannibal asked to watch them unclothe the body.

Jimmy took the shoes off and said, "Hannibal, did Franklyn usually wear lifts? Because there are lifts in his shoes. I'm guessing three extra inches."

"No, he was always about a half a foot shorter than me," said Hannibal.

"Then it must come from the killer," said Jimmy as he put the shoes in an evidence container.

They slowly unbuttoned his jacket and his shirt. Beverly gasped and said, "Ok, this looks like the killer put Franklyn in both Spanx and a corset."

"Isn't that overkill?" said Brian.

They slowly removed Franklyn's pants only to find out that his legs were also encased in Spanx leggings. "This explains a lot," said Hannibal.

"It just seems like a lot of work. I'm sure that she could have found someone more suitable without this much modification," said Brian.

"Perhaps the killer found the challenge interesting," said Hannibal.

"Spanx and corsets and tailored costumes aren't cheap. This person must be loaded," said Beverly.

Jack walked into the room. "Hannibal, did you know that Franklyn made you the inheritor of his entire one hundred million dollar lottery fortune?"

"I had no idea," said Hannibal truthfully. "One hundred million dollars?"

"After taxes, it's a lot less," said Jimmy.

"Why on earth would he have a will written like that?" said Jack.

Hannibal sighed. "I told him that I wanted to transfer him to another a psychiatrist that I thought could make more headway with his problems. He probably wanted to use it as a way to get me to keep him as a patient after having been rejected by nine previous psychiatrists."

Jack grunted. "It's problematic enough for you to work on this particular aspect of the case but the whole one hundred million dollar motive makes it verboten."

"I understand," said Hannibal.

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"Gumbo?" said Will as he saw what was in the bowl before him at Hannibal's dining table.

"I hope you don't mind me trying my hand at a somewhat unfamiliar cuisine."

"No, no, it smells great," said Will, smiling.

"Also, I made hush puppies."

As they sat down to eat, Will said, "I heard you're back on the case."

"Yes," said Hannibal. "Once the window of time was determined for when Franklyn's demise was to have occurred, it turned out that I had the perfect alibi at the time. I was having dinner with Jack and he stayed quite late at my place." He was still very miffed. Being investigated for this case really kept him from restocking his larder.

Will shook his head. "I'm glad you're still working with me on this case. And I'm sorry you lost a patient."

Hannibal instantly thought how to take advantage of Will's sympathy. He decided not to act as if Franklin was his best friend nor shrug it off but go for professional melancholy. "I tried very hard to help him. I am sad that I could not be of any use to him."

"I heard he had already gone to nine other psychiatrists but that he always ended up viewing each as a savior instead of a therapist. It's not your fault."

Hannibal thought to himself, What lovely eyelashes Will has. "I plan to donate some of the money to the local arts community. Do you have any other charities you think might be worthy?"

Will said, "Doctors without Borders has a good reputation. There's also the Maryland SPCA and Donors Choose.org."

"I will take that into consideration. Out of curiosity, what would you do if you received such an inheritance." He briefly envisioned Will living on an island with a hundred dogs.

"I think I'd sail around the world by myself."

Hannibal blinked. "Isn't that dangerous?"

"I'm a pretty good sailor. Also, I do plan on having multiple stops on the way. I don't plan on staying on the water the entire way. Maybe you should try sailing."

"I could get a yacht and perhaps you could teach me how to sail."

"I'm not that great a teacher."

"Will, you teach at the FBI Academy."

Will ducked his head and smiled shyly.

I want to bone you so bad, thought Hannibal.

Chapter End Notes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wanderer_above_the_Sea_of_Fog is the painting referred to for Franklyn's corpse.

The actor who plays Franklyn is said to be 5'7" according to IMDB.

My personal head canon for Franklyn is that he won the lottery.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In his home office, Jack looked at the profile that Will, Hannibal and the forensics team had come up between them.

"The killer is possibly a woman. She may be unusually strong or have an assistant who does all the heavy lifting. The killer is interested in fashion and makeup to a degree that would not be common among most men. There are signs that the killer may be either wealthy or have access to items not commonly available. She has great attention to detail as she has not left behind any hair or fiber sample that could not be traced back to anyone except the victims. We are looking at a well-educated person as the first victim was reminiscent in clothing and ornamentation of a Greek goddess of justice. The second murder tableau is reminiscent of a particular Romantic painting. We believe this points to a leader who is more likely to be in her forties than her twenties.

"To look for her, we may have to see if any of the items can be traced to a specialty shop. We also believe that the killer is local in nature in that they seem to know the area well and the selection of Franklyn, someone neither well known nor particularly esteemed nor the focal point of intense hatred of a niche community, suggests that we should expend special effort in this angle as Freddie Lounds had many, many, so many people who wanted her dead."

Jack sighed. Even though the profile was fairly specific. he wasn't sure that the Kade Purnell would go for putting effort into eliminating suspects until the profile was further refined.

"Jack, come to bed," said Bella, standing in the doorway.

"I'll be right there."

"And one more thing! Don't scream 'Ripper' instead of my name when you're coming."

"I said I was sorry!"

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"I'm worried about him," said Brian as he, Beverly and Jimmy were sitting in his backyard, drinking beer and eating chicken wings.

"Who, Will?" said Beverly.

"No, Jack. Every murder is the work of the Ripper to him. Any second, he's going to see road kill in the road and ask if that's the work of the Ripper."

Jimmy giggled at that. "Will would flip if he did that."

"Yeah, I can tell the Captain Ahab routine is really grating on Will's last nerve," said Beverly.

Brian sighed. "But what can we say?"

"Not much," said Jimmy.

"I just hope he doesn't get as obsessed with The Beautician as he has with the Ripper."

"He needs to go on vacation," said Beverly. "Maybe he could take his wife somewhere nice."

"Yeah, that's going to happen," said Brian.

"You heard about Hannibal inheriting a hundred million, right?" said Jimmy. "Man, I wish I could inherit even a fraction of that much."

"I wonder what he's going to do with all that money, anyway?" said Beverly.

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"You seem like you're woolgathering," said Mrs. Komeda as she served Hannibal a cup of Earl Grey Tea along with a plate of English biscuits in her salon.

"I apologize but I've come into a fairly large inheritance and I am considering purchasing a yacht."

"Oh, you've never expressed interest in sailing before. My husband happens to have one. You should come with us when we go out on the water."

Hannibal took a sip of the tea without milk or sugar. "Truth is that I asked my friend what he would do if he came into funds and he stated he would like to sail around the world. It sounds enticing."

Mrs. Komeda narrowed her eyes in amusement. "Are you interested in asking him if you could join him on this adventure?"

"The gambit did cross my mind."

"Is this someone I know?"

"I don't believe so. He is a teacher at the FBI Academy and someone I often work with. His name is Will Graham."

"Is he special, this friend?"

"Very."

Mrs. Komeda took a bite of biscuit then took a sip of tea. "You're infatuated with him."

"Mrs. Komeda . . ."

"I really must meet this person."

"Perhaps, I shall ask him to come with me to view your yacht."

"There you go."

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Will did an appreciative whistle when he saw the Komedas' yacht. "It's beautiful," he said.

"I know," said Hannibal. With a bit of coaxing, he had gotten Will to let a professional style his hair and dress him in a casual yet stylish fashion.

"I was thinking the boat would be more like a runabout but it's like a miniature cruise ship," said Will. He was by no means exaggerating. The yacht was over a hundred feet long and several stories tall.

A lady with a brown bob dressed in a summer dress and her rather innocuous looking husband walked up to them. "Hello, Hannibal," said Mr. Komeda.

"Mr. and Mrs. Komeda, this is my friend, Will Graham."

"I'm so glad to finally see you," said Mrs. Komeda.

"What have you been telling them, Dr. Lecter?" said Will.

"Just that he holds you in the greatest esteem," said Mrs. Komeda. Ah, she thought, it's so cute that he calls him 'Dr. Lecter' when annoyed. "He did not tell me how comely you are."

"I'm right here, honey," said Mr. Komeda.

"Just keeping you on your toes, my dear," said Mrs. Komeda.

After walking up the ramp to the back of the yacht, a large hulking servant came by with a serving tray of champagne flutes. "Oh, please, take one," said Mrs. Komeda.

"Thanks," said Will, taking a flute.

Hannibal did the same. He took a sip. "Delightful."

Mr. Komeda said, "I heard you were in the market for a yacht."

"Are you selling?" said Hannibal.

"No, I plan on keeping this for a while but I know of a few friends who, unfortunately, need to downsize and would appreciate a cash infusion. Perhaps you could tell me if you're in the mood for something like this or something more cozy after I show you around."

Mr. Komeda showed them inside. "We have five guest cabins which can fit ten guests. Its cruising speed is 19 knot and its maximum is 26 knots. We also have a kitchen and dining room. Towards the back, we have a jacuzzi and a fully stocked bar."

"Wow," said Will. "That's impressive. I'm guessing that this is not a ship someone can handle all by himself."

"We have a crew of five though we usually also have a chef on board. Do you have a boat, Mr. Graham?"

"It's a sailboat and a fraction of the size of this. I usually sail by myself along the coast."

"Impressive."

Chapter End Notes

https://www.burgessyachts.com/en/sale-purchase-category/yachts-for-sale/motor-yachts/frivolous-00001602.html is the yacht I had in mind. It's around six million dollars.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal frowned to himself at Mr. Komeda seemed to be entranced by Will's looks, the man's eyes not straying from Will's face.

Mrs. Komeda said, "I will have the boat slowly pull out into the open waters. In the meantime, feel free to use the jacuzzi or the bar." A man was already standing behind the bar, trying to look helpful. Mr. and Mrs. Komeda walked into the interior of the yacht.

"Something wrong, Will?" said Hannibal.

"I didn't bring my swimming trunks."

"It is my fault for not reminding you to do so. Stay there."

Hannibal went through the library and dining room only to hear Mr. and Mrs. Komeda talking. His instincts told him to pause.

Mr. Komeda said, "We should make him our third."

Mrs. Komeda sighed before she said, "It would break Hannibal's heart. He really is fond of him."

"But darling, he looks like something from a Renaissance painting. He's perfect."

"A depressed Hannibal is a Hannibal who doesn't throw dinner parties."

Hannibal slowly and quietly walked away. He had no idea that they were into threesomes. While he understood that Will had considerable charms and appreciated it when people saw that he was not a drab mouse, he did not want to share him with anybody, even good friends. I must do something about this, he thought.

"Dr. Lecter?" said Will as Hannibal came back outside.

"Let us go up to the crow's nest."

"So, no swim trunks," said Will as they got to the viewing platform.

"Actually, I hadn't asked them if they had any extras because I overheard them talking. Mr. and Mrs. Komeda were discussing having a threesome with you."

"What?"

"Shhhh. However, Mrs. Komeda expressed worry that they would hurt my feelings if they were to hit on you since I invited you as my plus one and . . ."

"They assumed I was your boyfriend."

"It is the best way to get out of such an invitation. If Mr. Komeda happens to bring it up, you may go on and on about how possessive and insistent on monogamy I am."

"I'll be sure to keep that in mind." Will shook his head. "I wasn't expecting this."

"I did not know that they were into that sort of thing. It's not that I disapprove but I didn't want you to feel pressured into saying yes."

"How about we go down? I see that they've come out and are looking for us."

"Oh, instead of Dr. Lecter, call me Hannibal. It helps to sell the concept."

"All right," sighed Will.

"You're not in the jacuzzi," said Mrs. Komeda once they were back on the deck.

"We forgot our swim trunks so we decided to take in the view," said Hannibal.

"We have extras for our guests," said Mrs. Komeda. "Let me show you where they are."

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Sitting at a cafe table with her two co-workers, Beverly cut a crepe with Nutella and sliced strawberries into multiple pieces. Brian was eating a ham and cheese one and Jimmy satsified himself with a chicken and mushroom crepe. "Have you seen Alana lately?" said Beverly before taking a bite.

"It's been a while," said Jimmy.

"She's been looking good lately."

"In what way?" said Brian.

"She seems to have a spring in her step and she's gotten a whole new wardrobe, a major upgrade." said Beverly.

"You think she's been dating someone, a sugar daddy?"

"It's a distinct possibility."

Jimmy took a bite of his crepe before he said, "You missed your calling, Bev. Maybe you should close your eyes and magic out who the Ripper is."

"I'm just going by pure deduction and observation, Sherlock style."

"You mean that guy played by Banderwhack Cumderditch?" said Jimmy.

"That's not his name!" said Beverly. "Anyway, it's been nice to have a pause in the whacky murders lately." It had been a month since the last tableau.

"I hope the next victim isn't wearing spandex," grumbled Brian. "It was hard as fuck to peel back all the stuff from Franklyn. Then there was an avalanche of baby powder underneath all that. It's obvious they got a size too small for him. It must have taken forever even if he was dead at the time."

"Suppose we never catch these guys?"

"You mean the Beautician or the Ripper? Hell if I know."

Jimmy's phone rang. He picked it up. "Hello, Jimmy here. Really? I'll tell everybody else."

"What is it?' said Brian.

"Another 'artwork' has been found. We got to roll."

***

"I don't get it," said Brian. He was looking at the new murder tableau, found on a corner of Mason Verger's estate. Mason Verger was dressed in a white shirt and blue slacks, kneeling down with both hands on the ground looking rapturously at his own reflection in the enormous mirror set underneath him. However, where his reflected face would be, a clay pig face was on the mirror.

"I believe this is based on a Caravaggio painting of Narcissus," said Hannibal.

"You mean the guy totally in love with his own reflection," said Jimmy.

"The very same."

"And the clay pig face?" said Brian.

"He does own a pork empire," said Beverly, "But I think the killer was also referring to the fact that he has incredibly bad gossip about him. The problem with finding a suspect is that there are a lot of people who would probably like to see Mason dead."

Chapter End Notes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narcissus_(Caravaggio) is the painting Hannibal is referring to.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will walked up to them. "Sorry, I'm late." He circled the scene, occasionally stopping to take a closer look and said, "The killer glued crystal tears unto his face." He stood in front of the tableau and closed his eyes.

While Will was doing his thing, Jack turned to Hannibal. "Is this the work of the Ripper?"

Hannibal nearly blew a gasket but managed not to strangle Jack right then and there. "No, it is obviously much closer to the work of the Beautician. I am sure Will will agree with me."

Will opened his eyes and turned to them. "The killer is definitely not the Ripper and I'm pretty sure it's the Beautician. This setup shows the same devotion to pleasure for the potential viewer. This does not seem overtly personal. There have been a lot of stories about Mason hurting people but I don't think the killer was personally hurt or assaulted by him. She probably heard the rumors, observed enough of his behavior to believe them and is simply revealing her disgust with the person while finding his physical appearance appealing. She chose a work that reflected his true self."

Jack said, "I've heard that Margot would have a great deal of reason to want Mason dead. Besides the fact he has total control of the family's business and estate, he's been seen being quite rude to her."

Will didn't know where Jack was going with this. "Well, yes, family members are often the perpetrators . . . Wait, are you suggesting she's the Beautician?"

"She fits many particulars of your profile. Well-educated, wealthy, and lives in the area. She has been known to attend fashion shows."

"She's not the right age," said Will.

"Profiles are to guide an investigation, not rule it," said Jack, who was now looking rather excited about the idea of getting a serial killer. "I'd really like to talk to her."

Will sighed.

They hiked to the mansion. Jack knocked on the door and a butler opened it. "May I help you?" said the servant.

"I would like to speak to Margot Verger," said Jack.

"I'm afraid . . ."

"Margot Verger is ready to talk to you," said a brown-haired man behind him.

"Who are you?"

"I am Leonard Brauer, Margot Verger's lawyer."

He escorted them to a drawing room where Margot was sitting next to Alana. Jack raised an eyebrow.

"I'm sure you are here regarding the murder of my brother, Mason," said Margot.

"Would you care to state where you were prior to the discovery of the body?" said Jack.

"She was with me the entire weekend," said Alana, looking rather pissed.

"The entire weekend?" said Jack.

"Starting on Friday night," said Alana. "I drove her back here this morning only to have the gardener run into the house, screaming about what he saw. We accompanied him to . . . the display and called the police. Margot was as shocked as I was."

"I prefer Margot speak to me. Now, do you know who would do this to him?" said Jack.

Margot was quiet for a second before she said, "My brother is . . . was not a popular man. His lawyer would probably have a lot more information regarding that. He was not always forthcoming with me regarding what suits and negotiations he was currently dealing with. As for the manner of his killing, I can't think of anybody who would do that. It's completely insane." Her voice towards the end rose in volume and pitch.

"When was the last time you saw him?"

"Friday night before I left. I asked the staff and the last person to see him was our butler handing him a snifter of brandy in his bedroom before retiring for the night."

Jack grunted. Alana was a bulletproof alibi and this current "art installation" was a labor heavy work. There was no way Margot could sneak away for a few hours, complete it and then sneak back without Alana taking notice. "Please be sure not to leave town while the investigation is ongoing."

"My client has been and will be most cooperative with this investigation," said Mr. Brauer.

"As Jack and Will walked away from the house, Jack said to Will, "So what do you think?"

"I sense hostility towards her brother and little grief. However, I repeat that this is not the work of someone who is both family level intimate with him and has deep grievances against him since childhood. If she was going to physically attack Mason, she would have used a blunt instrument, a knife or even multiple shots with a gun in a way that would exorcise her rage. Even if she wanted to show him to the world, she wouldn't have tried so hard to keep him presentable. She would have done something like stick a pig head on top of his neck or turn him into a pig version of a centaur. Besides, if she wanted to create a murder that would be much harder to pin on her, she would have hired someone who would have given her something much more pedestrian. No . . . someone else is the Beautician."

"Having her be the killer would have solved multiple murders at once."

"It wouldn't have solved anything if we ding the wrong person for them."

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Mrs. Komeda was surfing the net while her husband was watching an episode of The Great British Baking Show on his high definition TV. "What's the episode?" said Mrs. Komeda.

"It's bread."

"Bread is so difficult," sighed Mrs. Komeda. "Yeast is such a tricky beast and creating gluten is such a pain. Oh, honey, guess what!"

"What is it, dear?"

"Our work! It's already in the news and on Tattlecrime."

"Oh, what have they said about it!"

"They so appreciate the choice of material! Nobody likes or misses him! I don't think even his sister feels too bad about it. They do go on and on about how important and shocking it all is but I'm not hearing much in the way of love."

"Yes, but what about the actual presentation?"

"Some of them actually picked up on the Narcissus reference."

The man clapped his hands with great enthusiasm. "Oh, excellent! Considering the current state of our nation's education, I worry that they'd only be able to pick references to superheroes and Harry Potter. Oh, ick!"

"What is it, honey?"

"I just do not care for mixing chili and chocolate in bread."

Chapter End Notes

http://www.pbs.org/video/3001441869/ is the episode Mr. Komeda is watching.

Chapter 6

Hannibal looked at Will as Will took down the sail so the small boat they were on would come to a stop. For the past hour, Will had shown Hannibal how to pilot the boat using its engine and then showing how to use the sails and rudder on the boat. He also showed the facilities of the boat including a small bedroom, a small bathroom and a kitchenette. He also talked at length about navigation before the days of GPS, which involved the use of accurate timepieces, compasses, maps and celestial navigation.

Hannibal had found an excited and enthusiastic Will to be extremely winsome. Competency and mastery were two things that Hannibal found enticing in a possible partner. Hannibal had known many beautiful people but their heads reminded him of empty gourds. Will was an exception to this. "Shall we have lunch now?"

"Thanks, I'm starving," said Wll.

They went down. Inside the small kitchenette area, Will set up a small table and two chairs. Hannibal quickly plated the food. He put two empanadas full of shredded beef in rich sauce on each plate then added a scoop of curried potato salad. He poured two glasses of peach lemonade and said, "As for dessert, I have nectarine cobbler."

"Sounds delicious," sighed Will.

As they ate, Will said, "I meant to thank you for keeping Mr. Komeda from . . . propositioning me."

Hannibal smiled. "They are connoisseurs of beauty. I know what that's like."

"You're the first person I've ever invited to this boat."

"I feel honored."

"Jack doesn't know I have this boat, as far as I know. I suppose if he really pushes me too far, I could always sail off without telling him."

This rather alarmed Hannibal. "Sail off? I hope you would be sure to tell me before you make such a decision."

"I could trust you not to tell him?"

"Yes . . . in fact, I'd be interested in going with you."

"Going with me?"

"I could fund a long-term getaway."

"What about your practice? Your circle of friends?"

"My friends often take long vacations and jet set all over the world. As for my practice, I know psychiatrists who could take on my patients."

"It would be cramped quarters and not up to your usual standards. Also, the company would not be that great."

"I find the company delightful."

"Hannibal . . ."

"Yes, Will . . ."

Will tilted his head and smiled. "It would seem that you liked pretending to be my boyfriend. Would I be right in asking if you wish that we really were?"

Hannibal looked at Will and realized that Will had finally realized that Hannibal had been flirting with him and most importantly, Will did not mind. "Yes."

"Want to kiss me?"

Hannibal did not give him a verbal answer but leaned slowly towards Will just in case Will was toying with him before finally pressing his lips against that warm, welcoming mouth that tasted of his cooking.

***

"Jack Crawford."

Jack turned to see Kade Purnell standing in the hallway. "Yes?"

"Let's talk in your office."

Once there, Kade said, "Margot Verger's lawyer has complained about her being investigated not just for her brother's murder, which is right and proper, but also for other murders done by the serial killer known as The Beautician. I insist that you desist."

"She fits the profile."

"As does many women of Washington's high society. It is obvious that you need time off in order to regain perspective."

"I do not need . . ."

"This not negotiable."

"You are folding before her money and connections."

"Jack, I think you should rethink your attitude regarding this."

Jack realized that Kade was not going to change her mind. "When does my vacation start?"

"Next Monday."

***

"And she said it was not negotiable . . ." said Jack at the dinner table later that night, expecting Bella to be sympathetic and argue that he was utterly necessary to the investigation and needed to stay where he was.

This did not happen. "I happen to agree with her," she said.

"What?"

"And if she hadn't said anything, I would have." Bella walked out of the room and came back with two stacks of paper.

"What is this?" said Jack.

"One stack is my research regarding travel deals to Europe. The other stack is divorce papers. Choose wisely."

"Bella!"

"You have two minutes to decide."

". . ."

". . ."

"Italy?"

"Good choice, baby."

***

I really need to do my own art soon, thought Hannibal. Even though things had gone especially well after the sailing date with Will, he wanted to remind him of the obvious superiority of The Chesapeake Ripper over The Beautician. He flipped through the rolodex looking for a victim who could inspire him.

After looking through the entire thing, he felt frustrated. Every one of them was fine as a munchable but nobody really excited him.

His thoughts were interrupted by his phone ringing. He picked it up. "Hello?"

"Hannibal, it's Will."

"Good to hear from you. Has there been another murder?"

"Actually, Jack's going on vacation. At least that's the official story."

"And what is the unofficial story?"

"According to Beverly, she heard that it's a way of punishing Jack for considering Margot Verger as a strong suspect of being The Beautician. As of right now, he's taking an entire month off."

"Astonishing."

"Nobody's really surprised. The way he was going, he would probably have pointed at either me or Jimmy as The Ripper next."

Hannibal chuckled at that statement. "Who's in charge while he's gone?"

"Kade Purnell nominally is but she thinks things can run by themselves for the most part. I'm hoping that none of the usual killers strike during that time."

Hannibal briefly wondered whether he should step up his killing or put it on hold. He had a fun idea where if he stopped killing while Jack was gone and started only when he came back, he could make it appear that Jack was the killer.

Will continued. "If things remain quiet, maybe I could make you dinner?"

"Dinner? What do you have in mind?"

"Bouillabaisse and freshly baked bread."

He had never tasted Will's cooking and was most curious about his abilities. "Sounds enticing. Are we eating at your house or on your boat?"

"House this time. Interested?"

"Date and time?"

"Not this Saturday but the next at seven."

"My calendar is free."

"I find that hard to believe."

"I promise to be there and I always keep my promise."

"Goodnight Hannibal."

"Goodnight, Will.

Chapter 7

"Let me tie that for you," said Hannibal as he fixed Will's bow tie. Mmm, he thought, scrumptious. It's like wrapping my own Christmas gift. They had just had an early dinner at Will's house and Hannibal helped Will get dressed for a night at the opera. "There we are, just perfect." He had bought Will a tailored tuxedo with cuff links and pocket to add some color to the ensemble.

"Will the Komedas be there?" said Will as they walked to Hannibal's Bentley.

"Yes but trust me, they will not bother you in the least. After all, once you turned down Mr. Komeda's request for you to model for a session of sketching, they got the message and were perfectly polite. Our box seats are strictly for us."

After they were both seated in the car and Hannibal began driving, Will said, "I wonder if Mr. Komeda had Titanic fantasies."

It takes a few seconds for Hannibal to get the reference. "Out of the question." The only one allowed to sketch you that way is me, he thought. He thought of Mr. Komeda scrawling a rather pathetic stick figure of Will and let the corners of his mouth turn up a full millimeter in amusement.

"I wonder what your other friends will think about me."

"If they are to remain my friends, they will speak well of you." Hannibal felt rather confident about this as a few whispers of perhaps being cut from the invitation list to his dinner parties or a decrease in patronage of a favorite charity would help to quiet any criticism.

"You might lose a lot of friends."

"I don't mind losing them."

"It's interesting that since Jack left, things have been quiet." Will laughed. "If the murders start up again, maybe I should ask Jack if he's been committing serial murders just to keep his job."

"I'd love to see his reaction."

"He's not imaginative enough, though."

"He'd be so insulted if you said that." Just because it's true, Hannibal thought, doesn't make it sting any less.

After they entered the lobby of the opera house, Hannibal saw the Komedas. Mrs. Komeda was in a royal purple frock with a white fur wrap while Mr. Komeda was in a tuxedo. The Komedas said, "Hannibal, Will, so good of you to come to the premiere."

"How could we possibly miss Wagner's Tristan und Isolde?" said Hannibal. "This is a first for Will."

"How wonderful!" said Mr. Komeda.

"Hello, Hannibal."

Hannibal did not have to turn around to know who was greeting him. It was Frederick Chilton, a most annoying frenemy. "Hello, Frederick."

"i have heard some truly interesting bit of news."

"Yes, Jack was ordered to go on vacation."

"I heard but that's not what I was talking about. I heard that you are dating Will Graham?" The tone of his voice was a mixture of shock, smugness and jealousy. "That's one hell of a gambit to get into his head."

"I'm right here," growled Will.

"I am dating him because I enjoy his company as much as I loathe yours."

"True, he must be utterly fascinating."

Hannibal had spent decades knowing how to make his face a still mask because otherwise it would have started twitching in irritation.

As Frederick sauntered away, Mrs. Komeda said, "What a rude little man!"

"Unfortunately, Will and I occasionally have to work with him."

"How insufferable!" said Mr. Komeda.

"Will, let's go to our seats."

"Sure, OK."

Unfortunately, it seemed that Chilton had soured the rest of the evening. Will was subdued and quiet throughout the performance, only clapping when everybody was clapping but giving only one word answers to Hannibal's gentle verbal prodding. Hannibal knew it wasn't the quality of the production because the soprano was lovely with a warm, expressive voice and the tenor was not only note perfect but believable in his professions of love. The orchestra did not have one off musician nor problems with tempo. The staging was spare yet impressive and convincing. However, he could not enjoy it as Will seemed preoccupied by what Chilton had said.

Once Hannibal had driven Will home, Will gave him a good night kiss. "I'm sorry I wasn't great company tonight. See you Wednesday."

"I will be eagerly awaiting you."

"Goodnight," Will said.

"Goodnight," said Hannibal. After he watched Will close the door and walked back to his car, he thought, You cockblocked me, Chilton. You must die!

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal checked his trunk and it was completely covered in plastic and absorbent materials to keep blood from staining the interior. He had vacuumed the inside of his car to keep stray hairs or anything with DNA from transferring from there to anywhere in Chilton's house. He sharpened his knives and his scalpel. He had even picked a a part of The Garden of Earthly Delights by Bosch to inspire him.

He drove towards Chilton's house, turning off the headlights a few blocks from his destination and parked nearby. After picking the lock of the back door, he sneaked into Chilton's house, a scalpel in hand, only to find what appeared to be two people all dressed in black wrapping a limp, naked Chilton up in a long carpet. Hannibal was about to spring into action when one of them blew into a blowgun and a dart hit him in the leg . . .

***

"It was such a surprise to see you there," said Mrs. Komeda, standing with her arms crossed. "Why were you there?"

Awakened, Hannibal found himself tied securely to a chair that was made of solid oak. It was obvious that the Komedas knew what they were doing when it came to keeping people from escaping. He saw that Chilton was tied naked to an operating table, seemingly unconscious. He also noted the padding and soundproofing on the walls and ceiling. "Where am I?"

"It's our sex dungeon," said Mr. Komeda, sitting in a folding chair opposite Hannibal. "Please answer my wife."

Hannibal decided to tell them the truth or as much as they could handle. "Chilton insulted Will. I wanted to take revenge." He let a single tear go down his face. "I am more sad that I didn't get to be the one to take him down than being captured."

"Oh, that's so romantic," said Mrs. Komeda, looking genuinely touched.

"Does Will know . . ." said Mr. Komeda.

"He does not. I don't think he would approve," said Hannibal. He so envied the two of them. They were living his dream, a pair of serial killer artists in a long-term loving relationship.

"You really should leave this type of things to the professionals."

Oh, they think I'm an absolute beginner, thought Hannibal. He briefly thought of telling them that he was the Ripper but he was not sure how they would greet that revelation. "I did not know Chilton would be your target. What do you plan to do with him?"

Mrs. Komeda described the design they had in mind.

"I love your work!" said Hannibal. It came to him suddenly. "You're the Beautician. You truly elevated Freddie Lounds to the heavens."

Mrs. Komeda gasped. "You're a fan?"

"Absolutely. What you did with Franklyn was utterly amazing. However, I don't understand why you chose him." If he was going to die, he wanted to have as many questions answered as possible.

Mrs. Komeda sighed. "I was once trapped in a conversation with him once at a party. He told me that he was already on his ninth psychiatrist, who was you, and that he knew you were just a hair breadths away from referring him to someone else. It was obviously that he was unable to improve no matter who his therapist was. Truly, it was a mercy killing."

Hannibal noted. "I agree with your assessment of my patient. I could not do anything for him because he did not see himself as the source of his problem nor the solution to them. He wanted attention and a companion instead of healing." He knew that he was gaining traction with the Komedas and he had to play his one trump card very well. While he did not fear death, he had no plans to die without having tapped Will's sweet, sweet booty. He also did not want his body to share a tableau with Chilton. "I must tell you that I often consult with the FBI and they've made a profile that does resemble you in a few particulars. However, the only investigator worth a damn is Will. Now that I know it's you two, I believe I can derail the investigation."

"Why would you do this for us?" said Mr. Komeda.

"Because you are my friends and aren't friends supposed to help each other? Besides, it's not like I can say anything incriminating about you two when I too went there with the express purpose of killing the man. Besides, due to your art, I inherited one hundred million dollars, enough to fund a long vacation out of the country for both me and Will."

Mr. and Mrs. Komeda looked at each other.

***

Brian and Jimmy felt terribly ashamed at guffawing at the new murder tableau found in Chilton's front yard but they really couldn't help it. Dressed in a tunic, Chilton had ears of an ass sewed to his ears and he was looking tearily at an apple that appeared to be turning into a gold facsimile. "I don't get the reference," said Brian, "But it's funny anyway."

"It's King Midas. He got the ears of an ass because he judged that someone else played a musical instrument better than the god of music and the god cursed him," said Jack.

"Then the gold thing is like the Midas touch of gold," said Brian. "I don't remember the ass ears story."

"Where the hell is Will?" snapped Jack. All the good feeling he had from days of wine, pasta, sleeping in, regular lovemaking, and fine art was evaporating by the second.

Beverly walked up to them. "You didn't know?"

"Know what?"

"Will quit his job and his sugar daddy is funding a cruise around the world."

"When is he coming back? And who is his sugar daddy?"

"I believe the answer is never and Hannibal is funding Will's great escape."

"Aaarghhhh!" yelled Jack at a volume that terrified all the birds within a block of his scream of frustration.

Meanwhile in the distance, Mr. and Mrs. Komeda were watching this with high-level surveillance equipment. Mrs. Komeda said, "Seeing him frustrated really is really quite amusing."

Mr. Komeda nodded. "It's delicious and well done like a good fougasse," he said referring to a bread, crisp on the outside and soft on the inside, resembling an ear of wheat.

The End

Chapter End Notes

A blowgun is a lot quieter than a gun and my head canon is that Mr. Komeda used to play the tuba.

http://chatterboxtheater.org/node/741 is what Hannibal had in mind for Chilton.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midas#Ears_of_a_Donkey is the story of King Midas and how he got donkey ears.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fougasse_(bread) is what Mr. Komeda is thinking about.

I did consider having Will show up at Chilton's house to kill him at the same time as everybody else so Hannibal could be thrilled to find Will so bloodthirsty but nixed the idea. I figured Hannibal would find having a long length of time with just the two of them in an isolated setting would make him extremely excited.

End Notes

http://www.hieronymus-bosch.org/ is a website devoted to Hieronymous Bosch who did weird but original paintings.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!